



Testimony to the Workforce and Talent Committee

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Presenters:

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Michigan Skill Trades Initiatives

Jeremy Frew-

Thank you Chairman Johnson and Representative Roberts and all committee members for letting us participate in today's committee meeting. We are excited to share the work we are doing at Jackson College and in the tri-county area, specifically in skilled-trades.

I will go over two initiatives that are currently going on, one in Jackson County, the Jackson Area College and Career Connections Early/Middle College better known as

JAC3, and another, going on in Hillsdale County, the Welding and Advanced Manufacturing Program known as WAMP

Dr. Woods will then talk about how these different models can and will be used when developing new programs in Dental Hygiene, Agriculture and Diesel and Heavy Equipment Technician.

Before I get into the overview of each program, I want to point out that these programs are built around community needs and partnerships. The programs are not Jackson College initiatives. These are Jackson County and Hillsdale County Initiatives. They are community initiatives with multiple partners and winners.

The Jackson Area College and Career Connections Early/Middle College was a result of conversations/discussions between local Jackson leaders in education, industry, and economic development. The discussion was focused on the immediate need for skilled workers in area of manufacturing. The recurring themes from the meeting were:

- The need to build a sustainable pipeline of trained workers
- The need to have students start early, preferably in high school
- The challenge of changing the perception of what it means to work in the industry-These are well-paying jobs in a safe clean environment
- That going at this alone does not work, this is a community problem
- That industry, community and educators need to leverage their resources and work together for a solution.
- That all partners must have both a financial investment in the process or program as well as be able to see the benefit or return on investment

Tim Rodger's, CEO of The Enterprise Group of Jackson calls it "Skin in the game."

The solution, a partnership between Jackson College, Jackson Intermediate School District, Jackson Area Career Center, Jackson Area Manufactures Association, and The Enterprise Group of Jackson to develop, design and deliver the Jackson Area College and Career Connections Early/Middle College

The Jackson Area College and Career Connections Early/Middle College is a unique, three-year learning program that creates a pathway to post-secondary and career success for its participants, without the familiar financial struggle or strain that accompanies college costs. Beginning with students' junior year in high school, participants will be able to simultaneously earn their high school diploma, Jackson College associates degree, and a technical/career credential within three years, with no out-of-pocket tuition costs for the student or the family. The cost of the program is paid for by local industry sponsors and high schools.

Students in the program are 'triple-enrolled,' continuing courses at their local high school, earning college credit toward an Associate Degree at Jackson College, and placed in school-to-registered apprenticeship with Jackson Area Manufactures Association's Academy for Manufacturing Careers—all while completing their high school diploma. Each student will have a direct relationship with his/her sponsoring manufacturer as a school-to-registered apprentice (with after school/weekend and summer employment). Graduates will then be expected to work for their manufacturing sponsor for two years beyond completion of the program.

The program's first cohort of 20 students started fall 2014 and the second cohort will begin fall 2015. The initial response to the program has been positive and the hope and expectations are that the 2015 cohort will be 25-35 students.

In Hillsdale County, a perfect storm was brewing – students leaving school without the opportunity for employment while employers are confined by a lack of skilled labor availability. Out of this storm, a partnership was formed between Jackson College, Hillsdale County Community Foundation and Hillsdale County Intermediate School District to develop the Welding and Manufacturing Program.

The program, open to all Hillsdale County public school students, focuses on Industrial Systems, Welding and Energy Systems. The 24-student two-year pilot program launched in fall 2014 with 20 dual-enrolled students. The program targets high school juniors for the two-year commitment, but interested seniors will be considered if openings are available in the program.

The Hillsdale County Community Foundation was so excited about the initiative that they have committed to funding a second cohort of students to be enrolled in fall 2015. The Hillsdale County Foundation will cover tuition, all required books and materials, any rental fees not covered by Jackson College, as well as unforeseen expenses that may arise.

To date, the 20 students originally enrolled in the fall 2014 Jackson College cohort have all successfully completed their coursework and are enrolled for winter 2015.

As I stated earlier these programs/initiatives are built on partnerships and they are designed to benefit all involved. Dr. Woods will now discuss how we are using these models and principles to develop new programs at Jackson College.

Rebekah Woods:

Thank you Chairman Johnson. My name is Dr. Rebekah Woods. I am the Provost at Jackson College. Thank you so much for the opportunity to be here this morning to share with you some of the work that is going on at Jackson College. As Dean Frew shared, and as with all community colleges, our focus is on what our community needs and how we can work together to meet those needs.

Especially in the vocational and technical areas, we are consistently trying to keep our finger on the pulse of what new and changing needs may exist in our area workforce. Some of the new areas we are currently working on are Dental Hygiene, Agriculture and Diesel and Heavy Equipment Technician.

Because of the successes we have found with the Jackson Area College and Career Connections Early/Middle College and the Welding and Advanced Manufacturing Program models, we are pursuing these programs with similar models in mind. We are being very intentional about including the area high schools, specifically the career centers and Intermediate School Districts, to provide a seamless pathway for students from their K12 experience through employment. We are also including industry and

community partners in the process. As with all of our successes, partnerships are at the center.

For example, the current agriculture program we are in the process of developing really began with our president, Dr. Dan Phelan, being approached by folks in the industry - Brian and Chris Sanford - who indicated there was a need for skilled employees in their industry that was not being met. As a result of that conversation, we asked them to provide us with a list of folks from the agriculture industry that would be willing and able to help us clearly understand what the need was, where it existed, how it was currently being met, what the skills and abilities were that they were looking for in potential employees, and how we could work together to address that need. Shortly thereafter, we brought everyone together and talked through those questions.

Everyone left that meeting pretty excited about what we could accomplish together. We began to get a good picture about where their employee gaps were, what skill sets they were looking for, what curriculum or pieces of curriculum we already had in place that could be useful at both the K12 and the college level, what additional work we would need to do and what our next steps would be. We actually meet again on Monday to begin reviewing some curricula and looking at other strong programs - most outside of Michigan - that we could visit in order to get a sense of what is possible. As you can see, this is a joint effort.

We've talked together as a group about the Jackson Area College and Career Connections Early/Middle College model for manufacturing and how we can learn from their successes and incorporate elements that would make sense for this program.

We want to ensure that the pathway for students from education to employment is as seamless and as short as possible.

We're exploring whether an early/middle college model would work. This would obviously require significant dual enrollment courses for students. One of the challenges with this model is the current system can tend to create tensions between the institutions – the school district and the college. Resources are tight for everyone, and the current model requires K12s to pay the dual enrollment costs to the colleges. This can end up creating stress between the organizations.

We also want to ensure that part of the students' educational experience is experience in the workplace through an internship. These, however, can be very challenging to find. Unless employers have the long-ball view, they may not be willing to invest the time and resources necessary to work with a new, inexperienced future employee. We frequently hear that it is easier to just do it myself rather than taking the time to teach someone else. They really have to be able to understand the long-term investment they're making – not necessarily just in their own company, but in their industry overall.

We are having a similar experience with the research we are doing for the potential of a Diesel and Heavy Equipment Technician program as well as a Dental Hygiene Program. We are talking with area industries. For Heavy Equipment we are in conversations with employers in the construction field, road construction, agriculture, even Consumers Energy who has indicated a need in this area. We are in the early research stages and still have much work to do.

These types of programs can provide strong sustainable job opportunities for students, but they are expensive programs for colleges. They typically have high equipment

costs and most have third-party accreditation requirements for small class sizes and specific numbers of full-time faculty.

However, this is the work that we do. We are always looking for creative ways to meet these goals – and public/private partnerships have been one promising pathway to help us meet these goals.